

**Remarks by Michael S. Owen  
Ambassador of the United States of America  
to the Republic of Sierra Leone**

**Ambassador's Special Self-Help (SSH) Projects Signing Ceremony  
Wednesday, April 20, 2011**

- Good morning. I am pleased to welcome you here today to mark the beginning of 17 new projects sponsored by the people of the United States in partnership with the people of Sierra Leone. We are proud to support these activities through the Ambassador's Special Self Help Program, which provides funding for small, community-based projects.
- These projects are designed in cooperation with community members, who contribute their own resources, usually in the form of labor and in-kind donations. Although small, these projects have an immediate impact on the local economy and quality of life for beneficiaries. The income generated by these projects helps participants pay for their children's school fees, meet daily living expenses, and save for the future.
- I am also very proud and happy to note that 12 of these projects were designed with the assistance of Peace Corps volunteers – who provide an important link to the rural communities these projects will benefit. Now that Peace Corps has returned to Sierra Leone following a sixteen-year absence, it is very encouraging to see that they are already doing what volunteers do best--- providing a bridge between the people of Sierra Leone and the people of the United States.
- The participation of Peace Corps volunteers – who actually live and work in the communities where these projects will be implemented – helps us to ensure a spirit of true partnership and mutual understanding.
- Today we will sign 17 agreements totaling more than 50,000 dollars. These funds will finance the construction of classrooms, libraries, and school furniture. They will also support several agricultural projects aimed at increasing production of rice and cassava. The beneficiaries will be

students, teachers, parents, and farmers in seven districts: Bo, Bombali, Kailahun, Kenema, Moyamba Port Loko, and Pujehun.

- On behalf of the people of the United States, I want to congratulate all the groups represented here today. I know that many of you have traveled far to attend this ceremony--- and I hope to repay the favor someday soon by coming to visit your successful projects.
- Thank you.